

A
S E R M O N

694.1.8.
12

P R E A C H E D I N T H E

CATHEDRAL CHURCH of *L I N C O L N*,

O n F R I D A Y, *February 27, 1778.*

Appointed by His M A J E S T Y to be observed as a General
F A S T, and Day of publick Humiliation.

York By *JAMES* Lord Bishop of St. DAVID,
and D E A N of *L I N C O L N*.

L I N C O L N; Printed and Sold by W. W O O D.

Mr. C R O W D E R, in Pater-noster-Row: and Mr. W A L T E R, at Charing-Cross,
London.— The Booksellers at *Cambridge* and *Oxford*: and the different Book-
sellers in the County of *Lincoln.* &c.

A
S E R M O N

TO THE WORTHY INHABITANTS
OF THE COUNTY
AND CITY OF LINCOLN:
THIS SERMON IS ADDRESSED
BY THEIR FAITHFUL

HUMBLE SERVANT

JAMES ST. DAVID.

ISAIAH 3d. 10th.

SAY YOU TO THE RIGHTEOUS IT SHALL BE WELL
WITH HIM.

WE are again assembled in obedience to his Majesty's proclamation, and I trust from a deep sense of it's strict propriety; to implore the aid of Almighty God on our Councils, and blessings on our Arms, in the disastrous division which yet prevails between the mother Country and it's Colonies. On a former similar occasion commendable was the national contrition for that accumulated guilt, which had inflicted so alarming a punishment. Serious the repentance, and general the acknowledgement of it's justice. Appearances were much in favour of the pious persuasion of an overruling Providence which influences and directs the operations of mankind. And shame and sorrow sat on the dejected countenances of all who then thronged our churches, for those offences which had averted it's protection from this Empire; and seemed the spontaneous effusion of every Christian heart.

It is to be hoped these pious and salutary impressions are not yet extinct amongst us. And that the recollection of this day, will add such fuel to this holy flame, by the fervour of our prayers, and the sincerity of our renewed repentance, that from vessels fitted for heavenly indignation, we may be found qualified for mercy and forgiveness. Such is the object of this solemn Fast. This is the humiliation to which we

are directed. It is only the actual departure from our evil ways; the loosening the bands of wickedness, and cultivating ~~that~~ ^a charitable temper, which can speak peace to this Nation and our consciences.

It is the Preachers duty on such occasions as the present to avail himself of those impressions, which solemn acts of Devotion have inculcated on the mind; and of the tender sensibility of those hearts and ears which justifiable alarms have quickened and made attentive. If ever therefore the sound of saving Doctrines were favorably listened to, this should be a kindly season for edifying Instruction to take effect.

Attend then I beseech you to the holy Prophets words, and patiently consider their purport and application. His was a warning voice from Heaven, to a People sinning under circumstances very similar to ours; especially in national blessings and national ingratitude. And his wisdom and divine commission were amply evidenced by his prophetick description of the particulars of our Saviours sufferings and character, seven hundred years before his appearance in our nature; and of the captivity of his countrymen in Babylon, two hundred years previous to that Event. A more calamitous and dismal scene can scarcely be described in words than is displayed in the paragraph from whence my Text is taken. The condition of Judah and Jerusalem was in truth that of the extremest difficulty. The commonest provision for the support of life was no more. The foundations of civil government subverted; their bulwarks against foreign and domestick enemies were weak and useless; and the elegancies and conveniencies of social Life confounded and laid waste. This is a subject which merits our most attentive consideration; as well on account of the reason assigned for these afflictions, "their doings were against the Lord." as because of the interesting declaration which accompanies it, "that with the Righteous it shall be well." By the former particular we may learn how to avoid a large proportion of these enumerated calamities, from which as yet, thanks be to God, we are exempt. And from the latter, collect some comfortable

comfortable hopes of removing those which actually oppress us ; if we profit by the lesson it inculcates. For under all these miserable sufferings, the messenger from God is directed to acquaint the Jews, that notwithstanding appearances at present ; or at other times disadvantageous to Individuals or the Community, all shall not suffer alike ; for as my Text has it, " say ye to the Righteous it shall be well with him."

The Doctrine before us is of great Importance. Indeed the existence of religious Principles depends upon it. For without persuasion of the influence of Virtue and Vice on particular or general prosperity and adversity, what motives shall persuade men to adhere to one ; or discourage them from the allurements of the other ? It must ever be the sheet anchor of the Wretched under all their heaviest Sorrows. Though it cost them many struggles to keep it constant on their minds. Under the national Calamities referred to by the Prophet, it was necessary to inculcate it with authority and energy, that the Righteous might not despond or degenerate ; by observing that in many instances Virtue was no security in general Evils : Lest they should be tempted like holy Job, to blaspheme their Maker without the same religious terror, that exemplary sufferer entertained of so horrid a proposal.

The same suggestion which was so graciously set before this sinful people, and which applies as an admonition, as well as furnishes some gleam of hope, seems peculiarly adapted to the present civil and religious condition of this great Empire. Without we are persuaded that our immoralities are the cause of our present evils : that our neglect of religious Duties has turned from this Nation the propitious eye of Heaven ; and consigned us over (till Reformation works amongst us) to temptation and distress : how shall we escape such pollution : or whither shall we have recourse for refuge ? I will therefore proceed to consider,

Unless

1. Who are the Righteous, to whom it promises felicity,
2. Refer that description and declaration to *our* general Character.
3. Deduce from the words such Doctrines as may persuade us to return to our Duty; and regain the protection which we have sued for.

1. It is the more necessary to consider carefully what is the proper description of the Righteous, because it is so frequently mistaken. The idea of right and wrong, or moral good and evil are indeed obvious to the human Mind; and their difference easily discovered. Those of Sense not more so. But in this mixed state where no one is perfectly good or bad, the exact boundaries are difficult to fix; because the enquiry interests *others*, to whose Hearts we must be strangers; and *ourselves*, to whom we are naturally partial. In addition to this, Superstition is no inconsiderable source of Error; as it often disposes us to imagine that there is Piety and Holiness in those Things which have no connection with *them*.

In general then the Righteous Man is he in whose breast the morally good and pious, virtuous and pure affections rule. And whose practice is squared agreeably to their dictates. The man who loves God with his entire Abilities of Soul and Body. Who fears him reverentially: and on that principle eschews Evil. Whom no Temptations of worldly Pleasure, Profit, or Honour; no apprehension of worldly Loss or Suffering; can persuade deliberately or wilfully to desert his Duty. To act against his Conscience, or transgress the boundaries of Justice. Such must be the intelligible notion of human virtue. Not that romantic Character, painted by the stoical Philosopher, the supposed original of which, has never in the whole course of his life either by ignorance or surprize, been drawn into such inconsiderate Actions; which on a review he could not vindicate. If this were the sense of Righteousness applied to human frailty; who could pretend to it? "for there liveth not a just man who sinneth not." But our God accepts us upon
lower

lower terms; such as are rooted in Sincerity; a predominant inclination to do his will; productive of the fruits of Piety, Penitence, and Charity in the whole course of our Lives. These are the "Righteous" with whom "it will be well" for they are the objects of heavenly protection, according to the unalterable rule of proceeding in the moral government of the World.

This Description is supported by our natural ideas of the Deity; and of the human frame: Goodness, Mercy, and Equity, direct the operations of his Almighty power, wisdom, and knowledge. And the materials whereof we are compounded, are perishable, frail, and subject to variety of Wretchedness. The Supremacy therefore of a Being so perfect as the former, acting upon the dependancy of one so necessarily weak as the latter; will never treat it as bound to more Virtue than falls within its powers. Must remember whereof we are formed; and that we are but Dust and Ashes before Him. — It is expressly the language of the Scripture. The Prophets with one consent declare; that the upright Man, tho' not wholly free from moral Defects, pleaseth God. And they preach the doctrine of *repentance*; promising in God's name the remission of all their Sins, to such as sincerely adopt it. As, "if the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord; he will have mercy upon him, and to our God; and he will abundantly pardon." And few are such strangers to the gospel principles as not to know that this also is the corner Stone by which our better Covenant is bound together? Our Saviour constantly enforces it as the ground of our acceptance to the rewards of Righteousness. Not indeed that protracted Concern for Sin, which has of late too often been incautiously displayed before the eyes of desperate Transgressors. The Child of present Sufferings; and result of impending Punishment. But that deliberate sense of Guilt, which produces actual Reformation; and perseverance uninterrupted in the ways of Virtue.

It was neglect of intitling themselves to so indulgent a system of duty; of complying with terms so adapted to their renewed offences, that weakened the public establishment of the Jewish Polity. Gave rise to frequent internal Commotions; foreign Invasions; and tedious Captivities in Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. And after subjecting them to the Roman Yoke, at length destroyed them by the Roman Arms. An indifference to such Conditions; and obstinate perseverance in Iniquity; closed likewise the existence of every State and Empire, from the Creation to the latest period of recorded Time. All received warnings of the guilt and misery of Sin by various moral methods; and all were equally unmindful of them. Thus successively fell the four great Empires of the World. The famous cotemporary Republicks. And those abodes of Commerce; respectively renowned for Science and for Opulence. The destructive Impenitence of Sodom and Gomorrah, is a perpetual monument of God's vengeance on a sinful nation. And the postponed punishment of Ninevah on its return to Righteousness, as lasting an encouragement to the Penitent. But these evident and awful tokens of a national superintending Providence, are chiefly considered as subjects for the employment of a vacant hour. Or at best as materials on which to exercise our Ingenuity, or literary Talents. The profane or sacred page of History, is seldom unfolded for those purposes to which it is chiefly applicable; the improvement of our social and religious Principles. The splendid and tremendous Ruins of luxurious and corrupted Cities, whether exhibiting their shattered Columns and Arcades on the surface of the Earth; or such as painful labour have uncovered from the heaps with which Volcanos and Earthquakes had overwhelmed them; serve only to amuse the curious Traveller, or gratify the Artists taste. But impress not on our intoxicated and thoughtless Minds, those instructive Lessons for which they are so peculiarly calculated. For

2. Apply this Doctrine to our National Character, and present Difficulties,

It

It has appeared from common principles of Reason, inforced by divine Sanctions, and variety of melancholy instances; that Righteousness is the ornament and guardian, and Sin the reproach and ruin of any People. But tho' strangers to neither Arguments, nor Facts; our general Conduct is, as if we had never heard the glad tidings of gospel pardon, nor been apprized of those repeated Judgments which have happened for our ensamples, "on whom the end of things is come."

It is apparent that the want of publick Virtue; forgetfulness of God; Idleness; Dissipation; and licentious Disobedience to lawful Authority; miscalled manly Liberty; were the effective causes of Destruction to those mighty States; whose prostrate Grandour it would be so advantageous for us on account of the Instruction they hold out to us, narrowly to look at and contemplate. For are we not at this period treading the same beaten road, in which they travelled; till they passed that wide gate which led them to Destruction, and for ever shut upon them? It is to this side of our present gloomy Prospect, that we should turn our sorrowful and repentant looks. Our most important Interests would be *unassailable* by the united efforts of our most malicious foes: *Vain* were the treacherous attempts of rebellious fellow-citizens: *harmless* the *alleged* misconduct of Sovereign or Servant: nay *pointless* were the eloquence or influence of the idolaters of popular applause, if each of these did not acquire peculiar force and venom from general misconduct. They are only the constant and regular *superstructures* on the rotten basis of Impiety. From this unerring string is sent that deadly arrow, which is so intangled in our sides; that to remove it, will require our utmost care and resolution. For grievous are our Offences, and shameless the Offenders. By the vitious and lazy of the lower Orders amongst us; our persons and properties are molested. And Fraud, Intemperance and Violence infest our private and publick ways. And amongst those who rank higher in Soci-

ety ; Dissipation, contempt of Sacred Ceremonials, uninformed and conceited Scepticism in Religious Faith : affected Indifference to the influence of liberal Example ; and supreme contempt of domestick Satisfaction ; are the fashionable Manners. And by this prevailing encouragement, the ingenuity of Seduction is whetted to contrive gins and snares to entrap the unwary by *usurious* loans ; those cankers of the hopeful buds of Education ; *fraudulent* temptations of pecuniary profit ; and *elegant resorts* of refined Pleasures, whose doors stand ever open for all descriptions of Society. Who then can wonder at the daily fall of many Families ? at the multitude of wretches which throng our courts of Justice ? at the repeated Bankruptcies ? daring Forgeries ; and unwarrantable practice of Defamation and Detraction ? The innate fondness for our excellent Constitution, which *was* our boast and Glory, is considerably endangered by such vitious extravagancy ; it's companion, profligacy ; and the intemperance of party contests. I *do not mean* to compare our present Condition in these sad circumstances, with any former period. Sufficient unto *our day* is the evil *thereof*. Neither can it be necessary to aggravate the circumstances of so ghastly a Situation. But I am persuaded, that at such a crisis as the present, it would ill become me, to qualify those errors which are so offensive to the eye of Heaven : or from ill timed delicacy, hesitate to set them to your view, in their genuine and obnoxious colours.

It is too notorious that we are fallen into that season, when we can bear neither our Faults nor Remedies. Each order of the Community shifts the blame upon the other ; and neither acknowledges the necessity of self amendment. Methods employed by Government to secure Obedience, Peace and Order, are invidiously maligned as the result of a premeditated System of Oppression, preparing for us by our Rulers. But were this really the case ; was Despotism to be apprehended from either Sovereign or Subject ; (and this detested Plant will spring equally in either Soil ;) all who love our excellent Constitution would do well to rouse that British Spirit, which has reflected so much honour on our Ancestors. And will, I trust, be ever ready to exert itself, when our invaluable Privileges are endangered. But except from studied refinements.

finements, or peevish speculations, what tokens of such intended mischief can be traced? Our natural and social rights are secured by the impartial and vigorous administration of Justice in every part of these Dominions. Our consciencies are unmolested. And the legislative and executive powers of the state harmoniously co-operate in the support of legal Freedom. Whither then are we to be sent for instances of these deep laid mines which are to burst upon us with such latent mischief? Must we cross the great Atlantic ocean; and search for them amidst our unhappy and deluded colonies in America? It is some satisfaction, however narrow and unjustifiable, that the distance is so great between this storm and home. But as they are our *fellow subjects*, to prove *their danger*, would demand our help, and call upon our vigilance.

But how does it appear that the evil genius of arbitrary power has set his mark on *them*? Till they became *seditions*, and aimed at democratick despotism; their opulence, their trade, their numbers multiplied. Infinite tokens of a thriving happy people were confessedly apparent. — And had they but known to value them, such at *present* might have been their portion. In their prosperity this country sympathized. In their day of danger our blood and treasure flowed for them unsparingly. Every blessing of this Empire enjoyed by us, was shared with them; as far as local circumstances and *Colonial* claims could have the least demand. In some respects they were indulged beyond the privileges of the mother country; because scarce any of our heavy incumbrances of national expence, (a large proportion of which has been incurred on their account,) had fallen on their shoulders. Whilst they continued alarmed by the designs of France; whose power was gradually encroaching upon their rights; and from apprehensions of whose tyrannick yoke, they wished us to deliver them; (though now perhaps their ally,) and as long as their prosperity was not enough advanced to awaken the ambition of some busy mal-contents amongst them: legal dependance, duty, compliance even with *revenue taxes*, the present torch of civil war; were acquiesced in; and acknowledged ours. But times are changed. They find less necessity for help from hence. We feel the propriety of some relief from them. Such equitable expectations in *the kind* of contribution, no novelty amongst them; in the *extent* adapted to

to their circumstances, and several descriptions; is exclaimed against as unjust and cruel. Is opposed with insult, outrage, and open violence. And has at length engaged us in our present bloody and expensive struggles: of which the bitter consequences will be entailed upon the children's children, of both parts of this divided Empire.

Such appears to be the unexaggerated and impartial state of this miserable and hurtful contest; which sharpens our plough-shares and pruning-hooks into hostile weapons, pointed at each others breasts. And such is the nature of those complaints which renders in their vehement language the name of *British Subject*, equivalent to that of *Turkish Slave*. And on this cool and deliberate opinion of their conduct, it is charitable in this day of general penitence, sincerely to pray for their amendment as a rebellious, though deluded people. Nor will I so evade my sense of duty, in a moment of such appeal to Heaven; as through fear of misrepresentation; to shun the warning of my hearers, against the various delusions of many who vindicate their practices. The subject matter of our controversy, is indeed to be *regretted*; may admit of *qualifications*; is *capable of healing applications*. And it is our mutual interest to resort to them. But considered in its fair and full extent, it is the cause of the whole legislature of this Kingdom insulted, and opposed. It is a question of no less a magnitude, than whether a much cherished and dependant branch of this dominion, shall quietly be suffered on insufficient motives to vilify our long continued generous conduct towards them? By arms and open violence to assert an unconstitutional independency both civil, and ecclesiastical; and even to *invoke* the assistance of that same hostile power, from whose arbitrary and Popish government, we have expended so much blood and treasure to deliver them?

That faults may have been incurred on both sides, is more than probable. I neither would deny it, nor undertake to vindicate all the steps that have *preceded*, or been subsequent to this pernicious quarrel.

It is to be wished that many unqualified to judge, would be proportionably reserved upon the subject. But I may be fully authorized in hoping, that as long as God sees proper to afflict us with so severe a scourge, candour, humanity, and mutual moderation may have place amongst us. Exaggerated description of the unavoidable severities of military operations, and ~~imperious~~ charges of wanton cruelty and insolent demeanour where neither has appeared, is unworthy artifice, and is a certain evidence of a weak and desperate party. So likewise to exult in distress or disappointment ~~faller~~ upon *either* side, (further than that such events may expedite a lasting peace) is an unpleasant symptom of an inferior understanding, and an unfeeling heart. When the parts of the human body are respectively affected, the whole must be proportionably hurt. And where the several portions of the body politick are wounded, the community must suffer with them. *injures* *falls*

But I will dwell no longer on such ruinous infatuation. All who hear me, however various their sentiments on this question, (and wise, honest and patriot characters there are, who widely differ on these points) will unanimously join in heavy lamentations on the present separation and distraction of this once prosperous and renowned nation. Great vigour, prudence and temper are necessary to recover our former harmony. The want of which may yield us up a prey to our national enemies. But if to a perseverance in that alacrity and courage; (which always has on former calls for them; as well as on the present; done so much credit to our troops and to this country;) genuine *christian* charity; morals and faith are added; by that universal reformation which is become so requisite; Then may we, agreeably to my

Third particular, obtain the divine interposition in our favour, for which we now have prayed, and which "the righteous only" are instructed to expect,

If we compare those features of impiety which disgrace and endanger us as a nation, with that similar state of sin, which ruined as considerable Empires as ours : from so gloomy a retrospect, we cannot but feel sensible apprehensions of similar fatal consequences approaching ; and when we throw into the scale already preponderating against us, the accumulated ingratitude with which our iniquities are stamped ; proportionable should be our contrition and repentance. For what country upon the globe, of past or present times, has ~~received~~ more signal blessings than our highly favoured spot ? It is here that every natural demand is satisfied, which human life can *wish* for its comfortable subsistence. And as the crown and grace of these, christianity indulgent to natural weakness, diffuses her kindly influence amongst us, with little incumbrance of *human* error, and no compulsory arguments of *inhuman* vehemence ; and makes its sole appeal to scriptural authority, and our best enlightened understandings. And here likewise, well regulated freedom, on the one hand, ably guarded from the grievous interference of arbitrary prerogative ; and on the other wisely distinguished from wild licentiousness, has fixed its chosen residence. Seasons of danger to each of these celestial treasures, have occasionally threatened to deprive us of them. But the interposition of Heaven has as often abetted our glorious struggles in their defence. And hitherto the result has been, and may it prove the case at present ! that their roots have acquired a firmer hold upon our soil, in consequence of the blasts that shook them. These assertions are evidenced by the experience of every foreign innate or native inhabitant of this land. The one extolling and almost envying our singularly happy constitution ; the other fully enjoying at present, the multifarious advantages resulting from it ; without the least well-grounded jealousy of interruption, but from the general depravity to be repented of and corrected. Let then any one determine whether a return to Virtue is not highly incumbent on us ? Whether we are not bound to it by every sacred motive of real interest and gratitude ? The Prophet's declaration that it shall be " well with the righteous," indisputably implies the converse

converse of the proposition, that it shall be "ill with the wicked." Solomon, indeed pronounces, "that all things came alike to all. None " knows either the love or hatred (of God) by the things that are " before him." But what he means to imply by this, is very consistent with my text; that tho' God be a ruler perfectly righteous, who most certainly will distribute to his creatures rewards and punishments according to their deserts; yet he acts freely in that measure, and with perfect wisdom. Therefore now thinks fit to leave the obligations to Morality occasionally more imperfect, and the motives to it less overbearing, than they *might* be, or *may* be in *another state*. Nevertheless they are sufficient; especially as he has given us satisfying evidence of his own moral perfections and government, tho' they do not in this state of trial, shine forth in their *full lustre*.

Thus manifest is it in every view of the question, that it shall be "well with the righteous," and "ill with the wicked." And the amiable character of the former, and dangerous tendency of the latter, are equally apparent. The positive evidences of reason, fact, and scripture of a particular and national providence have been deduced, and laid before you: And likewise its manifest interposition in *favour* of the good and penitent; and in *disfavour* of the bad and impenitent, has been suggested to your memories. Such arguments and proofs should awaken us to a due sense of our errors; of the dangerous precipice on which we stand: And likewise point out to us, that if we proceed in the same course, ruin must ensue. Why then do we require such frequent, such solemn admonitions of so necessary a change in our behaviour? Every motive is thrown before us that can excite repentance. Awful warnings; terrible examples; actual sufferings; and hopes of pardon and protection. Nay the oblation of God's own perfect Son has not been spared, to instruct us in his will, to atone for sin, and to direct us to heaven and to happiness. So that to the powerful call of all our dearest interests, the strongest engagement of gratitude is added.

Can

Can we therefore with our eyes open, persevere in opposition to every principle so sacred, and in avowed defiance of so many threatening dangers? Shall we devote our health, our fortunes, and our precious moments to intemperance, dissipation and vanity, regardless of our own or country's reputation and prosperity? Shall we as it were in sport, play with the daggers and the death of factious discord, for purposes of malice or ambition? And thus endanger the *existence* of the best regulated government; the *prevalence* of a heaven-taught system of religion? Shall our publick affluence, gallant spirit, political talents, (of which no nation can boast a larger portion than our own) be turned against ourselves? And those things which should have been the materials of publick welfare, be converted into instruments of publick destruction? Such conduct is the completest gratification of the wishes of our most inveterate enemies; but can never be consistent with that natural desire of self-preservation and security, which every society endeavours to provide for.

Let us retreat then as soon as possible from these erroneous paths. Into variety of wretchedness have we wandered. It is yet in our power to recover our peace with God, and to clear up these gloomy prospects which oppress our spirits. Encouraged by the declaration of my text; and instructed by past and present instances of the fatal effects of unrighteousness; let us seek for reconciliation with Heaven and each other upon these terms; and by these methods which bid the fairest to obtain, and to perpetuate it; such as mutual forgiveness, and solicitous attachment to the welfare of the community at large, together with a persevering observance of moral and religious *truth*, in our publick and private demeanour.

T H E E N D.

